

BEHIND THE MASK OF "UNITY AND INTERNAL PEACE"

Do Communist Parties Mean It When They Talk of Abandoning
Violence and Engaging in Peaceful Political Action?

1. Since early 1948 Communist parties in many countries of South-east Asia have carried on bloody insurrections aimed at the overthrow of democratically-elected, non-Communist governments and their replacement by Communist regimes. These governments' programs for reconstruction and national development have been hampered and disrupted by the need to concentrate all energies upon the suppression of rebel violence. The growth of stable and orderly democratic political institutions has been checked and the lives and property of the people placed in constant jeopardy by the Communist determination to win by armed force the power which they were denied by the votes of the people.

2. It speaks well for the strength and vitality of the young, newly independent governments in these countries that everywhere the Communist appeal to force has been defeated. Under the leadership of the late President Magsaysay, the Philippine Republic has reduced the Communist Huks to a handful of terrorists hiding out in the jungle. The Government of Burma under such leaders as U Nu, U Ba Swe, U Kyaw Nyein and General Ne Win, has withstood the assaults of Than Tun's Burma Communist Party insurgents whose once powerful forces are now capable only of senseless destruction and wanton banditry. In Malaya, while preparations for independence go forward, cooperation between the majority of the people and the British authorities has frustrated the Communist attempt to seize power by violent revolution. In Indochina, while Communist armed forces have been able to control parts of Vietnam and Laos, they have failed in their major purpose--the overthrow of the non-Communist governments of South Vietnam and Laos.

3. Now, faced with defeat and failure in their policy of seizing power through armed struggle, these insurgent Communist parties have changed their tactics. In Burma, the Philippines, Malaya and Laos the rebels who not so long ago boasted of military victory and the

establishment of people's democracies and the dictatorship of the proletariat are now talking about unity and cooperation. They are desperately seeking negotiations which will let them come out of the jungles and take up the role of legal opposition or loyal coalition partner which they once rejected and abandoned. All this is, of course, in perfect harmony with the tactical change of the international Communist line which has had to face the fact that the policy of Communist expansion by military action was no longer yielding profits.

4. How much reliance, we may well ask, can be placed in this alleged change of heart which has been forced upon the Communists by their military reverses? Do they really mean it? Has the leopard really changed his spots or has he simply given them a coat of white-wash? It is a well-known part of Communist doctrine that tactics may be changed widely in accordance with the situation, but the basic goals of world revolution and destruction of all rival political systems must not be and are not lost sight of for one moment. Are we not justified in suspecting that the new appeal of the Communist parties for unity, peace and cooperation is nothing more than such a tactical change, adopted because--with the temporary failure of violent revolt--it offers a more promising road to the unchanging Communist goal?

In the Communists' own words:

"Lenin taught the Party how to retreat in good order when the forces of the enemy are obviously superior to our own, in order to prepare with the utmost energy for a new offensive." (History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolshevik), p. 219.)

Or, as Pravda put it, as long ago as 1914:

"Marxist tactics consist in connecting different methods of struggle, in skilfully shifting from one to another." (Pravda, April 17, 1914.)

That the long-established Communist principle that Socialism can come only by violent revolution has not changed, despite current

talk of united fronts, ceasefires, and purely political action, and that it is accepted by Asian Communists as well as by Europeans, is attested by a statement by the Politbureau of the Chinese Communist Party reported by the Peking People's Daily on December 29, 1956. It is part of a restatement of the fundamental principles to which all Communist parties are expected to adhere:

"The proletariat, under the leadership of the Communist Party... takes power from the bourgeoisie by means of revolutionary struggle."

5. It is clear that the Communist movement has always recognized the desirability of shifting its tactics from armed revolution to united front and back again in accordance with the situation, but that it preaches that the final victory must come through armed struggle. The history of the world in the last few decades is replete with illustrations of Communist practice of this theory.

However, we do not have to rely exclusively upon such basic Communist theory to support our suspicions of the sincerity of the new Communist attitude. There is direct evidence that even while insurgent Communists are seeking negotiations or actually negotiating with the governments which they failed to overthrow, they are reiterating their determination to establish a Communist regime and are planning for the renewal of the armed revolt whenever the situation becomes more favorable.

Burma

6. The Burma Communist Party, in insurrection since 1948, has suffered serious military defeats and has no present hope of military victory over the Government. Since early 1956 it has been making proposals and approaches to the Government for negotiations which would legalize the Party and permit it to engage in legal political action. In the latter part of 1956 and in 1957, the Burma Communist Party, besides covert approaches to the government, has made public approaches through letters to political leaders and manifestoes to the public, expressing the Communist desire for peace and legality. A public

manifesto, dated November 29, 1956, included the following statement:

"The Burma Communist Party has always followed a policy of peace and has placed the People's interest first. The Burma Communist Party has no interest other than that of the People. During the year it has placed the desire of the Sanghas / Buddhist clergy/ and the People first and has always tried to bring about negotiations for the ending of the civil war and the restoration of internal peace."

This, from a party which has for nine years been carrying on a bloody rebellion and is still raiding towns and villages, blowing up trains, shooting up busses and dynamiting aqueducts, is a little absurd on its face, but there is further evidence.

7. During a military operation against the Burma Communist Party, the Burmese Government captured a Party document. This document was a transcript of a Party conference at which Thakin Than Tun, Burma Communist Party leader, answered questions on Party strategy and tactics. The transcript was prepared for the members of the Party Central Committee. Dated October 25, 1955, this statement of Party principles was intended to make clear to the inner circle the real purposes behind the campaign for a ceasefire, peace, unity and negotiations upon which the Party was about to embark. Than Tun said:

"The moment we get a ceasefire, we will use our democratic rights to continue the fight, to add to our strength, and prepare once more for armed struggle. Until the Civil War ends we will use the method of armed insurrection non-stop. There is no question of a coalition with the Nu Government. The final goal of seizing power must be won through violent methods. There is thus a change in strategy. It is not to form a coalition with the Nu Government but to eradicate it. While we are fighting within the democratic fold, the armed method will have to be held in abeyance, but the final struggle will be with weapons."

The necessity, from the Burma Communist Party point of view, for this temporary change in strategy, was also explained by Than Tun:

"The decision as to what is the right method will be reached when we are in a strong position. With mass support the initiative will then be in our hands. We must note that at the present time we do not have that advantage. Therefore we must strive after mass support."

This clear statement, in advance, of the real motives and purposes of the Burma Communist Party in seeking legal status and renouncing civil war, gives the lie to the high-sounding statements in its public propaganda.

Malaya

8. The Malayan Communist Party, like the Burmese, began a civil war against the government in 1948--a war which is still going on. Unable to face government forces in the field, the Malayan Communist military activities have consisted principally of acts of terror and sabotage from which the villagers and other noncombatants have been the chief sufferers. Government forces have reduced the strength of the Malayan Communist jungle guerrillas to less than 3,000, a force completely without hope of overthrowing the government. In this militarily hopeless situation, the Communists in Malaya, like those in Burma, have since the beginning of 1956 been making proposals to the government which include negotiated peace, a ceasefire and legalization of the Party.

But the Malayan Communist Party, again like the Burmese, took pains to warn its members in advance concerning the true significance of the united front tactic upon which it was about to embark. The Party paper, Freedom News, in June 1955 reminded the Party membership:

"As we are all aware, our armed struggle and united front are two weapons which the Party employs in scoring victory over the enemy. These two weapons are

inseparable. They react on each other; they impel each other; and they coordinate with each other."

Could we ask for a clearer statement from the Communists themselves that they regard their new appeal for peace, cooperation and the united front simply as a variant in tactics with the goal of Communist revolution remaining unchanged?

Laos

9. In Laos, where the Communist Pathet Lao, with the support of the Communists of North Vietnam, has been in insurrection since 1953 and still denies two provinces of the country to the government, negotiations have been going on between the Pathet Lao and the government for more than two years. Agreements in principle were signed by the leaders in August and December of 1956 which would provide for the integration of the Pathet Lao into the government and army of Laos and the participation of Pathet Lao leaders in a coalition government. Throughout these negotiations the Pathet Lao has professed its peaceful intentions, its devotion to national interests and its innocence of revolutionary ambitions. What it is really planning, however, was revealed by the statements of a captured Pathet Lao officer with high connections in the organization under interrogation by the Laotian authorities. The Pathet Lao, he said, had no intention of a real unification with the government. It planned to renew the fighting and expected additional support from the Vietminh. If unification (of the Pathet Lao and the government) was adopted, the Pathet Lao would then have cadres in all echelons of administration and military bureaus of the government. These cadres would pretend to be loyal to the government but would actually do all that they could to subvert the government, replace old functionaries with Pathet Lao members and, finally, eliminate all remnants of the old regime and establish a "People's Democratic State."

10. It is clear that neither the Burmese, the Malayan nor the Laotian Communists have any intention of renouncing the policy of violence or their ultimate aim of the overthrow of non-Communist governments. If they advance such ideas, temporarily, it is only with the intention of weakening the vigilance of anti-Communists,

winning a much-needed breathing space for themselves, and gathering their strength in preparation for a new attempt to destroy the democratic regimes and institutions of their countries and to install Communist governments in their places.

Non-Communist governments which entertain such proposals of unity, peace, legalization and cooperation from rebel Communist parties should be clearly aware that while tactics may shift, the basic aims and strategy of Communism remain unchanged--world revolution and the destruction of all rival political systems.